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**THE SYNTHESIS AND PHARMACOLOGY OF  $\gamma$ -AMINO BUTYRIC  
ACID RECEPTOR MIMETICS**

by

Jane Anne Margaret McDonald BSc

A thesis submitted to  
The Council for National  
Academic Awards in  
partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

Department of Chemistry  
Sir John Cass School of Science  
and Technology  
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Department of Chemistry  
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*August 1981*

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### Memorandum

Except where acknowledgement is made by reference, this thesis and experiments described were the unaided work of the author. The work was carried out under the supervision of Dr. J. Collins in the Department of Chemistry at the City of London Polytechnic in collaboration with Dr. D. Reynolds in the Department of Chemistry, Glaxo Group Research Limited, during the period October 1978 - July 1981 and was supported by a studentship from the Science Research Council.

### Statement of Advanced Studies Undertaken

Attendance at a course of Neuropharmacology lectures for postgraduates and an undergraduate Organic Mechanism course. Departmental lectures and seminars were also attended.

### Acknowledgements

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Finally, I am indebted to my parents for their great support throughout my academic career and to my husband for his encouragement and endurance.

### Publications

The following publication has appeared on the work or derived from the work presented in this thesis.

Collins J.F., McDonald J.A. and Newton R.F. (1980)  
Characterization of the binding of  $^3\text{H}$ -Isoguvacine, a  
 $\gamma$ -Aminobutyric acid agonist, to brain synaptosomal  
membranes. Brain Res. Bull. 5/2, 141-144.

### Abbreviations

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| GABA             | $\gamma$ -Aminobutyric Acid                     |
| CNS              | central nervous system                          |
| BZ               | benzodiazepine                                  |
| P4S              | piperidine-4-sulphonic acid                     |
| BABA             | $\beta$ -amino-n-butyric acid                   |
| THIP             | 4,5,6,7-tetrahydroisoxazolo-[5,4-c]pyridin-3-ol |
| APSA             | 3-aminopropane sulphonic acid                   |
| NaCl             | sodium chloride                                 |
| Ci               | curie   |
| cpm              | counts per minute                               |
| sem              | standard error of the mean                      |
| bp               | boiling point                                   |
| mpt              | melting point                                   |
| cc               | cubic centimetre                                |
| min              | minute  |
| ml               | millilitre                                      |
| mol              | mole  |
| mwt              | molecular weight                                |
| $^1\text{H}$ nmr | proton nuclear magnetic resonance               |
| glc              | gas-liquid chromatography                       |
| hplc             | high pressure liquid chromatography             |
| psi              | pounds per square inch                          |
| dec              | decompose                                       |
| tlc              | thin layer chromatography                       |
| EPSP             | excitatory post-synaptic potential              |
| $\text{\AA}$     | Angstrom  |
| Fig              | figure  |



## Abstract

### The Synthesis and Pharmacology of $\gamma$ -Aminobutyric Acid Receptor Mimetics

Jane Anne McDonald

$\gamma$ -aminobutyric acid (GABA) has been shown to be an important inhibitory neurotransmitter in mammalian central nervous system (CNS). GABA receptors have been previously characterized in mammalian brain using  $^3\text{H}$ -GABA itself, a potent GABA agonist,  $^3\text{H}$ -muscimol, and the GABA antagonist,  $^3\text{H}$ -bicuculline methiodide. Recently, it has been suggested that 1,2,3,6 Tetrahydropyridine-4-carboxylic acid (Isoguvacine) is a potent GABA receptor agonist. It has also been reported to act as a mixed agonist/antagonist at the GABA-benzodiazepine receptor complex.

The binding of  $^3\text{H}$ -Isoguvacine to frozen-thawed, rat brain synaptosomal membranes has been investigated and found to be saturable, specific and stereospecific. The pharmacology of this  $^3\text{H}$ -Isoguvacine binding site was seen to be consistent with an interaction at the post-synaptic GABA receptor site. The effects of detergent treatment on this binding site were investigated and indicated a single site, both in control and in Triton X-100 treated membranes.

A series of benzodiazepines were shown to displace  $^3\text{H}$ -Isoguvacine bound to frozen-thawed rat synaptosomal membranes. This effect was shown to be temperature-dependent and could be blocked by picrotoxinin ( $10^{-4}$  M). Pentobarbitone was also seen to displace  $^3\text{H}$ -Isoguvacine binding, albeit at high  $\text{IC}_{50}$  values; an effect antagonized by picrotoxinin. Neither the benzodiazepines nor pentobarbitone had any effect on  $^3\text{H}$ -GABA binding in frozen-thawed membranes.

In contrast, using fresh rat synaptosomal membranes, neither the benzodiazepines nor pentobarbitone had any effect on  $^3\text{H}$ -Isoguvacine binding, whereas both were shown to potentiate  $^3\text{H}$ -GABA binding.



A series of conformationally-restricted analogues of GABA have been synthesized and tested using two in vitro assay systems, viz. the rat superior cervical ganglion and a radioligand binding assay. These studies revealed that the class of GABA agonist, in which the amino groups are incorporated into six-membered rings exhibit an unexpected variety of activities with respect to their ability to inhibit  $^3\text{H}$ -GABA binding; their affinity for GABA uptake sites and their interaction with the coupled GABA/benzodiazepine sites.

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